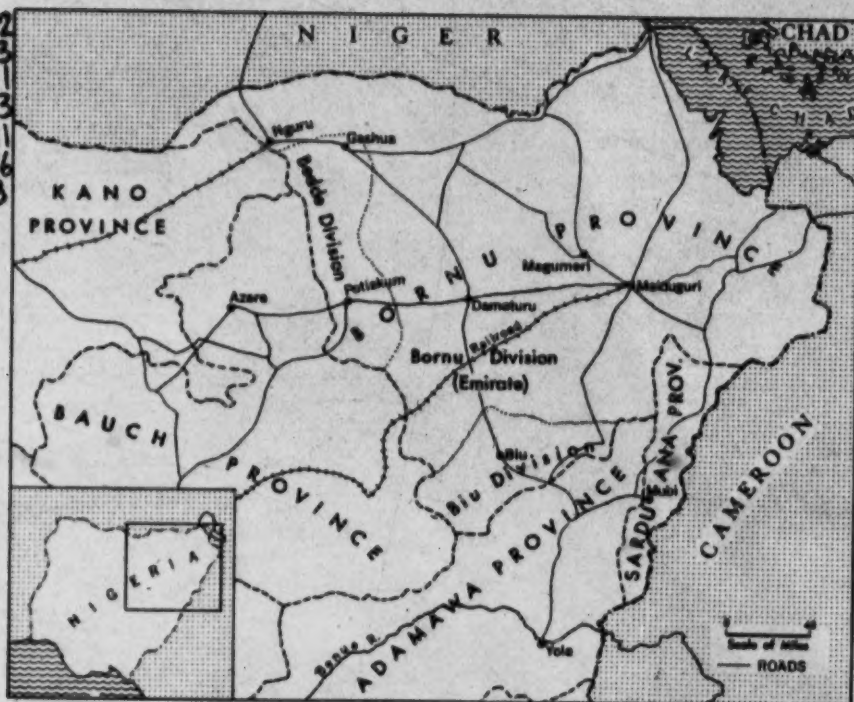


1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

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86 • THE ECONOMIC LIFE

592 in cash he receives all year and he has made elaborate plans for its disposal. He
443 often watches the scale men for several weeks asking questions about them from other
43 farmers, perhaps even going to visit a few to see if he can obtain a slightly better
[455] price than that set by the government. On their side the scale men may try to buy a
"future" if they see the farmer is in trouble. This involves a cash advance and a much
lower final sale price which is intended to cover the greater risk by the buyer since
the crop may fail. This practice is illegal, and there have been very serious attempts
to stamp it out.

592 Craft production and special services such as religious prayers or barbering
443 are made available in several ways. If someone needs a new hoe, or a mat, or a cal-
445 abash, or the services of a religious person, he may go to that person's household
and ask for it. Even in large villages whose markets are open every day it is still
common to go to the household of a producer and purchase things when they are
required. On the other hand for many things it is still common to go to the market
and see what is available.

443 Markets are held weekly and referred to by the day of the week they are
[192] held in any particular village. More often than not people use this weekday as an-
[103] other name for the village itself. Thus in Magumeri a man says, "I am going to
Thursday this Monday," meaning that on Monday he is going to Ngubbura, the
village that has its market on Thursdays. Even large villages whose market places
are open every day are known to have one day a week that is their "real" market
day. Thus the market in Maiduguri, the capital city, is much busier on Mondays, its
named market day, than during the rest of the week. The reason for this is the
link-up of market villages into interlocking cycles.

[996] The best way to understand a market cycle is to ask a Kanuri, "What mar-
443 kets do you visit?" He then generally gives you a village for every day in the week
484 except for Friday, the Moslem sabbath. These are a series of villages of medium
438 size, usually within a radius of five to ten miles from the village in which you
asked the question. Not everyone goes to a market every day, but they know of one
in their vicinity and may go to as many as three or four a week if they are busy
trading goods. Sometimes they may visit two villages on the same market day one
in one direction this week, then another one in the other direction next week, but
to a remarkable degree Bornu markets do have a weekly cycle in which people can
visit a market close by on any day of the six working days of the week. The reason
these weekly market cycles are interlocking stems from the fact that no two villages
have exactly the same cycle. Thus a man in Magumeri might go to Ardoram eight
miles north of Magumeri for his Monday market, but the Magumeri man goes to
Ngubbura five miles to the south of his own village for the Thursday market. On
the other hand on that same day the Ardoram man goes further north to a village
in his cycle rarely ever visited by the Magumeri people, and he in his turn does not
often attend the Ngubbura market which is thirteen miles south of Ardoram. So
each village has some, but not all, markets in common with others close by, and the
entire countryside is linked into interlocking sets of these weekly market cycles. It
is important to remember here that many people walk to market, and it is more
difficult for the Ardoram man to walk the twenty-six miles to and from Ngubbura
market than it is to walk the much shorter distance to his own Thursday market.

ried he must decide where he will set up a house. There are three possible alternatives: (a) he can bring his wife into the house of his father or older brother, or patron whoever the superior man might be; (b) he can set up his own compound close by; or (c) he can move further away and become independent or subordinate to someone else. The decision depends upon whether or not the young man is benefiting from the previous relationship, in which case he usually stays in or near the original compound, or whether he believes himself to be suffering from it, in which case he moves or tries to move away, or near to someone more powerful, influential, and economically beneficent with whom he can associate. The decision is often a very complicated one because myriads of other factors enter into it. Thus if there is a large age discrepancy between a younger man and his older brother, and the father is dead, the younger one may feel that his older brother will never treat him as a man but always as a "young boy." Or if there are brothers and some are full (same mother, same father) while some are half (only one parent in common) then the half brothers are less close and are usually linked to different groups of people through their mothers. One young man told me confidentially that he was worried about whether his father would continue to be successful and whether he should not try to use some of his father's powerful connections in Bornu to become the client of a more important person whose position was even more impressive and more secure than that of his own parents. On the other hand many people would speak about leaving home and setting up households on their own or under influential men and never seem to get around to doing it. When asked about this they replied that this was their home, these were their relatives, and whether it was beneficial or not they ought to stay with their kinsfolk. For them blood is thicker than water, that is to say, they feel their roots in a kinship unit must be the eventual determinant of where they spend their lives.

It is these processes of household growth, and associations between households, that underlie the formation of small-scale political units in Kanuri society. The process can best be seen by observing a real life situation. About three miles southwest of Magumeri is the small hamlet of Gworongo (population circa 250-300) which falls within the boundaries of Magumeri village area. Surrounding the hamlet are small bramble-fenced plots of a special crop called *gworongo* which gives the hamlet its name. This plant is used by women as a stimulant and cosmetic along with tobacco flowers. In 1953 one of these farmers, a man named Aji, moved out of the hamlet and set up a compound near his plots of *gworongo*. He says he wished to be closer to his fields; others gossiped that he had quarreled with the hamlet head of Gworongo over taxes. With him moved his two wives, a younger brother, and the latter's wife, and two unmarried sons. One of these sons left about a year later to go and live in Maiduguri with his father's younger brother. The other son married in 1957 and brought his wife to live in the compound near his father. A stranger to Gworongo hamlet arrived in 1954 and cut a bush farm for himself about one mile to the north of the settlement. He had no wife at the time and asked Aji if he could build a hut near the new settlement and take his meals in Aji's compound. For this hospitality he helped Aji on the *gworongo* plots, prepared household fences, and sometimes gathered grass for Aji's horse. He has since married with both a loan and some gifts from Aji and is now a settled member of the new "community-in-the-becoming." He says that Aji is his *abba njima*, and he is a tada njima or client of the settlement head.

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94 THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

622 and he is a *tada njima* or client of the settlement head. All residents of this new
 159 settlement look upon its founder as their local leader. Disputes between members
 578 are always taken to Aji before going to any higher authorities while disputes with
 627 outsiders follow the general Bornu rule of going first to a political leader superior
 692 in rank to both participants. The new settlement does not have a name; however in
 103 all likelihood if it continues to grow and Aji's place is taken by one of his heirs,
 651 either his brother or his son, it will be called Aji or Ajiri after its founder. At
 present Aji collects taxes from the men of the new community, and these are taken
 632 by the hamlet head of Gworongo to the head of Magumeri village area. Aji hopes
 159 that one day he will be able to take the taxes directly to Magumeri, thus helping to
 62 indicate his equal political status to that of the hamlet head of Gworongo. When
 627 that happens he will be a recognized bullama or head man of a hamlet or ward. He
 692 tries to take disputes directly to Magumeri village, but in 1957 this was not ac-
 cepted and the hamlet head of Gworongo was invariably called to sit in on such
 discussions.

The same process can be seen operating in larger villages. In Magumeri vil-
 lage itself one ward under its bullama (ward or hamlet head) was, in 1957, be-
 coming large enough so that people were beginning to speak of the possibility of
 its splitting into two under the old bullama and a new one. In the ward a man
 592 named Kachella has under his authority the compounds of several younger full
 571 brothers, three of his sons two of whom are married, several nephews, and a few
 651 unrelated clients who say they are his *tada njima*. He collects taxes from these com-
 692 pounds and takes the money directly to the village head of Magumeri. However he
 592 recognizes the authority of the present ward head in settling disputes and always
 consults the latter first before taking the matter to a higher authority. One of his
 sons has married a girl from the household of the ward head and this helps link
 the two households. The ward head seems tolerant of the rising power and
 influence of his neighbor and always consults him on any major decision affecting
 the ward. Eventually however, if the set of linked households under the authority
 of Kachella continues to expand, then he will become a recognized bullama of his
 own ward of the village and the office will be passed on to his heirs.

The Village Area

632 The village area in Bornu includes a major settlement which gives the area
 621 its name and a set of surrounding smaller hamlets that are included within the po-
 622 litical boundaries of the village area. Thus Magumeri village area includes the vil-
 lage of Magumeri and a series of little hamlets in the surrounding countryside. As
 we have seen, smaller villages are divided into wards under bullama and the ham-
 lets surrounding the village each have their own bullama as well. In other words
 all recognized political leaders under a village area head are called bullama. The
 head of a village area, that is, the political superior of all bullamas in the village
 area is called the *lawan*. However the system is flexible and a few large cities such
 633 as the capital city of Maiduguri, as well as several other centers with populations
 over 10,000, have several *lawan*, each in his own ward of the city. Under these city
lawan are sub-wards again under the bullama. Thus the traditional nineteenth-cent-

The District Organization

In Bornu the lawan represents a link between the higher political authorities and the ordinary peasant. To the people in the rural areas he is the most apparent and easily reached member of the ruling classes. Their hamlet and ward heads are leaders but only in a local sense, while the lawan represents the authority of the central emirate government since he is officially appointed by this body. To many ordinary villagers the exact nature of the political organization above the level of the lawan is not at all clear. They know that beyond the lawan there is the district head and above him the Shehu of Bornu, but the various councils and agencies of the emirate government are things they know very little about in detail. 632

In terms of the emirate as a whole, however, the district head and his organization of the district is the pivotal political focus in Bornu. His is the office through which all central government policies from the capital are translated into action at the local level. Conversely, if there are any disturbances, irregularities in tax revenues, increases in crime, migration out of the district, or failure in any policy goals or action programs, it is to the district head that all the agencies at the center turn for an explanation. 634

To the lowly peasant the district head is a man in another world, a world of awesome power, riches, and courtly life. A lawan may go abroad to oversee a new well in one of his hamlets, or to mark off the boundaries of a new farm plot, or to take a tax census, but the district head rarely ever leaves his compound except for the occasional trip to oversee nomad cattle taxation, or to appear in some local ceremonial, or to attend the Shehu's court in the capital. When he does venture forth, it is a royal sally to the playing of pipes and drums, with a troop of galloping horsemen and servants brandishing swords, spears, and muzzle-loading guns. Today this is being changed somewhat by the motorcar which carries the district head quickly and silently, but district heads can still create quite a stir when they wish to go forth officially among the people.

The district organization is basically quite simple. Each of the twenty-one districts in the emirate is identified by the name of its principal village (in some cases these are quite large towns), and this latter serves as the district capital. In this capital lives the district head and his followers and all the district representatives of the various emirate civil service agencies. These include such installations as a district courthouse for the Alkali (judge) and a primary school formerly up to the end of Standard IV, now almost universally up to secondary school entrance. Formally, the district head is responsible for the administration of all the village areas and any nomadic population that may be living within the confines of the district. [103] •

The district head is appointed and installed by the Shehu in consultation with his council and the local representatives of the Northern Nigerian government. Only high ranking men in the state are considered and almost all the present district heads are sons of men who held a similar position. There is a growing tendency to try to get men who have some western education, but as yet many of the present district heads speak no English and have not attended western schools. In [64] [554] [177]

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[GEIDAM]

571 his allegiance to the Ajia who might otherwise be tempted to
662 replace him with one of his own men.
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178 The kabuna represent a special category in the adminis-
571 tration of the district. The colonial administration makes no
631 provision for the kabuna; they are not NA appointees as are
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178 all the other officeholders mentioned above; they receive no
salary. Yet, the services which they perform are vital if the
district bureaucracy is to continue to function smoothly. The
kabuna represent a traditional Kanuri social category whose
roles are primarily in the political sphere. The roles of the
kabuna have been slightly modified and adapted to the modern
situation, but the relationship between kabuna and Ajia and
between kabuna and populace is a traditional one and is once
again typical of the persistence of the old social stratifica-
tion system into the present.

571 Yerima Mustapha has fifty-nine kabuna at Geidam. Some
634 are slaves; some are free. Many have been with Yerima for
years and years. Head of all the kabuna is Wakil Ali, a slave.
The kabuna are each given a house to live in, a horse belong-
ing to Yerima, a plot of land to farm, and ceremonial trap-
pings for themselves and for their horses. In turn, they
swear allegiance to Yerima and work for him.

2. A history of important office-holders in Geidam.

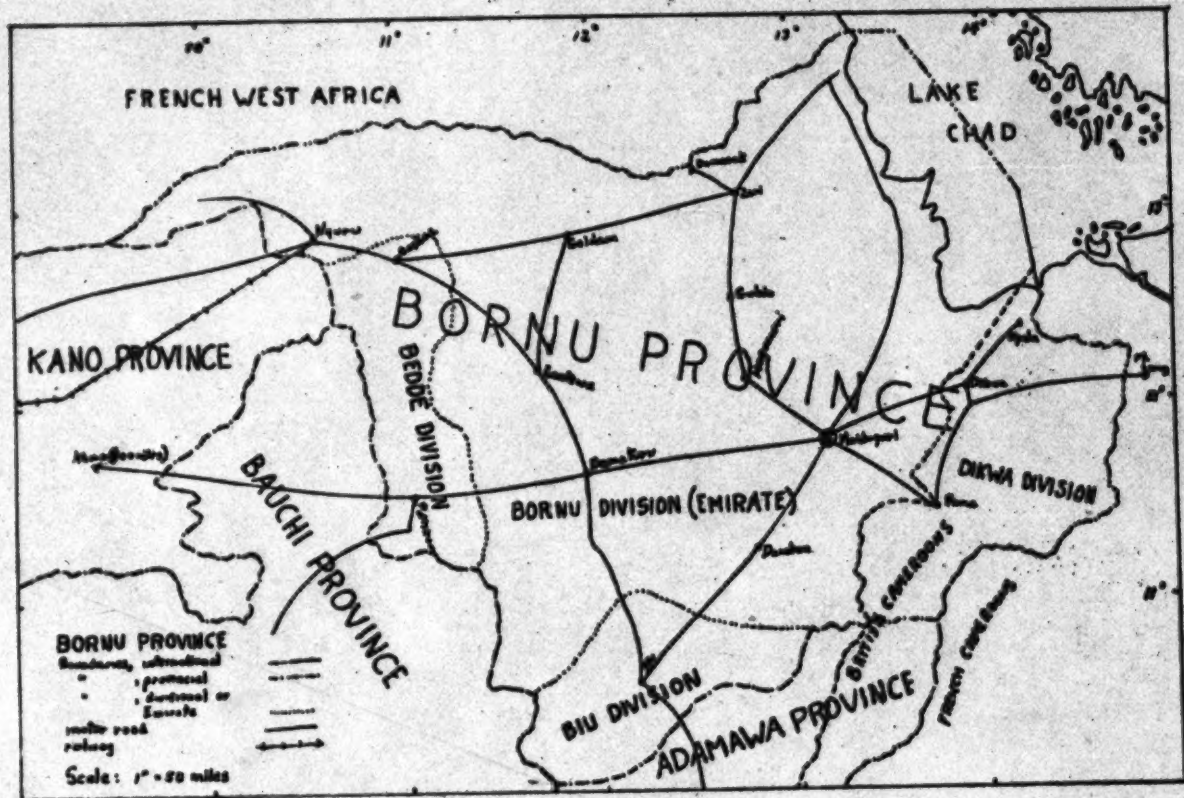
175 The present town of Geidam is on the site of an old town
• [63] called Damjeri. Five miles to the west of the present Geidam

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[GEIDAM]

175 was an old town called Geidam Balara, from which the town today
• [103] takes its name. In the eighteenth century, when the capital
of Bornu was at Birni Ngazargamo not far off, Geidam was part
of the Mai's lands. Later, when Kukawa became the capital,
and the Mais were replaced by the Shehus, Geidam became part
175 of the fief granted to the Imam. Since Geidam District is
634 very large, it was divided among a number of chimas. The town
[632] of Geidam (Dajeri and Geidam Balara, at that time) was con-
trolled by Kazella Ibrahim Geidama, a slave of the Imam who
served as chima qana (literally little chima--serving the real
chima who lived in the capital). Geidam was a kalyari, an
area under the authority of a slave.

The first Ajia of Geidam, in the early years of the twen-
tieth century was Kazella Sulama, a slave of the Shehu's. He
was followed by Aba Rafaga, a son of Shehu Ibrahim, who served
[648] as Ajia of Geidam until his death in 1915. Maiduguri had not
yet been built and the Mounted Infantry, along with many Euro-
peans, were stationed in Geidam. Aba Rafaga was the most im-
portant of the Ajias at that time. Kazella Kakami (Kaigama)
then became the Ajia of Geidam, where he served for almost thirty
years until his death in January, 1944. Kaigama Kakami was the
son of Kaigama Bilel, the commander of the army during the days
of Shehu Laminu. His son, Kaigama Zubairu, succeeded to the
title of Kaigama and to the office of Ajia of Geidam. Kaigama
Zubairu remained Ajia of Geidam for ten years, until he was de-
moted to a smaller district, Damboa, in 1954. In 1954 Yerimu



3rd Edition E-4, 5 (1956-1957) 1960

Map 4 Revised Map 14
Nigeria PPT 28

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• 103 The locality within the Emirate in which concentrated field work has been carried out is Magumeri situated about thirty-five miles northwest of Maiduguri on a motor road. Magumeri is the name of both the district and its capital town. The area has a much higher proportion of Kanuri than the Emirate in general. In Magumeri district ninety-six per cent of the population are Kanuri while this is true of only sixty-two per cent in the Emirate as a whole.

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632 The district contains 52,000 people (1952) and has an area of approximately four hundred square miles. Within its boundaries there are sixteen village area units including the Magumeri village area. This village area has a population of 4,200 of which roughly 2,000 live in the village proper and 2,200 live in hamlets within the village area.

When compared to other rural district capitals in the Emirate, Magumeri village area is slightly smaller than the average. Excluding the two large cities of Nguru and Maiduguri, the population range for district capitals varies from 1,400 to 11,000, and the average is 5,100 persons. Seven district capitals are smaller and eleven are [166] larger than Magumeri village area. It is reported by long term residents to have been a much larger village at one time but to have been losing population steadily over the past twenty years to Maiduguri.

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621 Like all other Kanuri settlements, Magumeri is built in a U shape around a central plaza (dandal) open at the west end with the house of the highest ranking person at the east end facing west. Lesser political leaders in the village have their own smaller plazas, again 366 with their houses at the east end facing west. Another feature common to all Kanuri settlements is the placing of the butcher's section at the southwest side of a town or market so that the prevailing winds from the northeast carry the odour away. Like other district capitals,

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However, resuscitation was at hand. In the last part of the

15th century, the kingdom was reconsolidated by the 48th Mai, Ali

Ghajidani (1472-1504 A.D.), who quelled the civil wars and restored some

measure of peace between the high ranking officials, with himself firmly

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in authority. He built a new capital, Birni Gazargamo on the river Ye

(Komadu'u Yobe), about half way between the present towns of Damasak and

Gedam, on the border of Nigeria and French West Africa in Bornu Province.

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His reign was marked by the re-conquest of the territory of Kanem, north-

east of Chad, the extension of Bornu hegemony into Borku and Tibesti in

the north, and continual but indecisive warfare against the powerful empire

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of Songhai in the west. It is also about this time that Bornu is first

mentioned in the early European maps of Africa put out by the Portuguese

cartographers of the late 15th century. Mai Ali's reign was followed by

a series of others no less notable, including that of Mai Idris Alooma,

for whom we have a contemporary record written by his court scribe some-
time around the beginning of the 17th century. (1) It is Idris who is sup-

posed to have introduced the technique of burnt brick into the area.

However, there is some doubt on this point for it is known that the Songhai

king Mansa Musa brought back from his great pilgrimage a Granada poet and

architect, Es Saheli, who built a mosque at Gao (200 miles due east of

Timbuctu on the Niger) of burnt brick at the beginning of the 14th century. (2)

[721]

When the second empire was founded at Birni Gazargamo, fight-

ing increased against the So, a people with whom the Kanuri seem to have

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fought continually throughout their history. A small digression must be

made here in order to assess these often mentioned So people of the

ancient traditions. These people are said to have been native to the Bornu

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartus: History of the First Twelve Years of the Mai Idris Alooma, 1571-1583, by his Imam; trans. by H.R. Palmer, 1926.

(2) Beville, E.W., Caravans of the Old Sahara, London, 1933, p. 73

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175 to Bello and complained that violence was being used for political
721 aggrandizement, not religious conversion. Bello replied that the attacks
were justified because of the oppression of the Fulani in Bornu, and the
heathen practices of the Kanuri people, and because of aid given by Bornu
to Kano and Katsina to resist the holy war.

Between 1809 and 1811 the capital fell again to the Fulani
and was retaken a second time by Lamitu for the Kanuri, but it was aban-
175 doned from this time forward as the center of the Bornu state. The results
178 of these few years were cataclysmic for the history of Bornu. The Fulani
727 invasion was halted, although the western vassals were now under the
643 sovereignty of the Fulani Empire of Sokoto. Bornu had survived the Jihad
(holy war), but at the cost of her famous capital of Birni Gazargame, and
the loss of a dynasty of rulers, the Magumi Sefuwa, who had retained the
monarchy for 1000 years. For in appealing to Lamitu for help, the Kanuri
Mai triggered off the beginning of his and his family's end as the effec-
tive monarchs of Bornu, meanwhile initiating the beginning of the Kanembu
dynasty which sits on the Bornu throne today.

175 The traditional Mai set up a new capital, called Kafela (open
643 place) near the present town of Monguno, and Lamitu resided for a while at
• [103] nearby Ngorno on the shores of Chad. However the constant threat of inun-
[361] dation from the Lake forced him to move his headquarters further inland to
[72] Kuka which became the 19th century center of the Bornu state. Ruling from
behind the scenes, with the Mai still on the throne as a puppet, Lamitu
tried to re-consolidate the kingdom from 1820-35, by recapturing the west-
ern vassals, and even at one point (1826) by menacing Kano. It was during
this period that Denham and Clapperton visited Bornu and in their publica-
tions we have a good record of the contemporary court life and politics of
the kingdom, as well as some glimpses into the nature of everyday life in

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China Kura sent out a messenger from the capital to his representative in the fief, the China Gana, instructing him of the total demand of the levy. The messenger and the China Gana then raised the tax levy in the fief and extracted a surplus for their pains.

Part of this tax was given to the Shehu by the China Kura as sada'a (tithe). However, we are told that another tax was levied (also called the sada'a) which was specifically a royal revenue. Opinion differs as to the organization of the levy. Some sources tell of the king selling collection rights to trusted courtiers, while others refer to this tax as a special harvest tithe collected by the fief-holder and his representatives, partly for himself and partly for the king.

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(651)

Within his holdings a fief-holder might use some of the area for his own purposes. For example, he might settle some of his slaves in a village and a large portion of the produce would come to him as his rightful property. Or again, the fief-holder might give a segment of his holding to a mallam or a group of mallams (religious teachers and practitioners) so that they might have land to farm and support themselves.

• (105)
(621)

Very often such a settlement would be nahram, i.e. tax exempt. These areas can still be noted in Bornu today in the names of villages. A village called Karliyari, or slave town is the present site of one of the old slave settlements in a fief, while the name Mallamari for a town refers to its past history as a town of mallams or holy men.

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In the case of the vassal states which were subdued in war, a portion of the tithes collected by the local chief would always be sent off as tribute to the ruler of Bornu. To insure that this practice was carried out, the Bornu monarch often placed a servant or a slave (never a relative) in the capital of the vassal state. When Richardson reached Zinder in the 1850's, he found an Arab of Tripoli who had travelled widely

556 the range of statuses he associated most closely with his own life. (1)

565
829 The differing life experiences of large segments of the population bring about common ranges of experience for the whole segment. Thus rural peasants form one large massive segment which can be called a class.

565 A large number of people in the city feel themselves to be
369 a part of this lower class segment, the tala or peasants. Certainly the common poverty among them keeps them all within one category of economic
[166] activity (materially); however, other factors are involved. A large portion of the city population are extremely recent arrivals in the urban
• [103] centres. Bornu cities, of which Maiduguri (or Yerma as it is called in Bornu) is the largest, have grown enormously in the past few decades.

This means that most of the people in urban centres are of recent rural (2) origin and thus still retain many of the sentiments of their background. This is not meant to contradict the discussion above on the rural/urban.

However, it should be remembered that the distinction is extremely various and very recent for many people. Another unifying factor is the maintenance of rural farms by city people, who move out, or send out a son or a servant, to cultivate a farm in the bush during the growing season, thus retaining their contact with the rural areas. One of the other

(1) Differing ranges of experience and personal aspirations may cause an expansion of the scale which people refer to. Thus one very ambitious young trader, from a peasant background, who still lived in the bush but was contemplating a move to the city, told the writer immediately, when asked, that Alhassan Dan Tata of Kano (one of the richest men in Nigeria) was a rich man. Nevertheless, lower class bush people generally used a frame of reference more nearly similar to the young peasant above.

[162] (2) Population figures for Maiduguri are as follows (see Coleman, J.S., op. cit. p. 74):

1921	1931	1953
16,274	24,359	54,646

Government service personnel in Bornu estimated the population of Maiduguri at 75,000 to 80,000 during the period 1956/57.